

John H. Westley House
1200 3rd Avenue
Fourth Ward Neighborhood
Altoona
Blair County
Pennsylvania

HABS No. PA-5833

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PHOTOGRAPHS
WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

Historic American Buildings Survey
National Park Service
Department of the Interior
Washington, D.C. 20013-7127

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HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY

JOHN H. WESTLEY HOUSE

Location: 1200 3rd Avenue

Date of Erection: 1881

Description: The location of the Westley House on a corner lot allows for the use of ornamental detail on both front and side facades. This wood-sided frame house is in many ways the prototype of the two-and-a-half-story, three-bay, side-gable house found so consistently throughout the Fourth Ward survey area. There is an enclosed off-center chimney rising from the roof ridge, and an entrance door at one side of the front facade. The addition of the projecting two-story bay window on the side of the house, however, is an unusual feature. A flat-roofed, two-story, rear addition is unornamented but of the same fabric.

Although the porch has been replaced, the remaining exterior woodwork appears to be original, intact, and complete. The ridges of horizontal novelty-wood siding provide contrast for the smooth surface of the roof cornice and the curved lines of the cornice brackets and pedimented window surrounds. In a typical pattern, four sets of double cornice brackets, ornamented with molded and incised decoration, are evenly spaced across the front of the house. A set of brackets at each side turns the corner, supporting the return of the cornice at the foot of the side gable. Shaped wood window surrounds make use of projecting and incised decoration, having flat inward-curving verticals that are capped with a stylized flat-topped pediment featuring pilaster-like pendants and a superimposed central keystone. These appear on the front and side facade; a picture-window version is used in the first floor front. The same window surrounds are used on the bay window, whose flat top has a cornice with single brackets at the sides of each face.

History: This corner house is built on part of the property originally purchased by C. B. Bowles of Tyrone, Pa., from John and Emma Wright for \$600 in February 1874. J. H. Westley bought the 50' x 120' lot from C. B. and Mary Bowles in April 1880 for \$750. John H. Westley, a carpenter, was assessed in 1881 for one lot and house, 3rd Avenue and 12th Street, valued at \$500. In 1900 Westley still lived here; his occupation was given as shop hand. In 1906, Westley worked as a machinist for the PRR and Lizzie Kerlin, single, boarded at this address. By 1912, she was the head of household, living here with Harry J. Kerlin.

The property was willed to Lizzie M. Kerlin who divided the property. In April 1922 she transferred 1200 3rd Ave. to Harry J. Kerlin, 1202 3rd Ave. and a rear parcel of 1200 3rd Ave. to Cloyd W. and Pauline Kerlin. In 1925 Harry and his wife, Crissie A., were residents of the house. Harry was a salesman of rugs and "Lyfe Tyme Furnytüre." Twenty years later the family business had become "Kerlin Furniture Warehouse." Cloyd and Pauline transferred the rear portion of the corner lot containing a garage to Harry and Crissie in 1925. The 1932 Sanborn map shows the garage as also functioning as a store. They sold their house and the garage to James R. Duncan in April 1946.

Dennis G. and Edna R. Duncan acquired the property the following year. Dennis and James R., both barbers, remodelled the multi-functional garage building, 309 12th St., as a barber shop.

The property, specifically including 309 12th St., was sold to Joseph and Patricia Dorfmeister in April 1974 for \$5,000. The current owner bought the house in 1987; it is presently vacant.

Sources: Maps: 1882, 1888. Deed books: 35/233, 44/503, 295/512, 403/237, 403/609, 342/560, 296/122, 295/512, 533/228, 556/491, 960/178. City directories. Tax assessment records.

Project Information: This report was part of a larger project to document the city of Altoona, Pennsylvania. The project was undertaken by the Historic American Buildings Survey/Historic American Engineering Record

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(HABS/HAER), Robert Kapsch, chief, at the request of America's Industrial Heritage Project (AIHP), Randy Cooley, director. Overviews of the history of the city (HABS No. PA-5784) and the fourth ward neighborhood (HABS No. PA-5786) provide context for these buildings as well as a comprehensive list of sources. See also additional HABS reports on buildings in the city and other neighborhoods.

This report was prepared by Susan Garfinkel in the summer of 1989 under the supervision of HABS senior historian Alison K. Hoagland and Kim E. Wallace, supervisory historian. Garfinkel's and other project historians' work was published as Railroad City: Four Historic Neighborhoods in Altoona, Pennsylvania (Washington, D.C.: HABS/HAER, National Park Service, 1990), edited by Kim E. Wallace, supervisory historian, and Sara Amy Leach, HABS historian.